



# Flash!: The Hunt for the Biggest Explosions in the Universe

*Govert Schilling*

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About three times a day our sky flashes with a powerful pulse of gamma ray bursts (GRB), invisible to human eyes but not to astronomers' instruments. The sources of this intense radiation are likely to be emitting, within the span of seconds or minutes, more energy than the sun will in its entire 10 billion years of life. Where these bursts originate, and how they come to have such incredible energies, is a mystery scientists have been trying to solve for three decades. The phenomenon has resisted study -- the flashes come from random directions in space and vanish without trace -- until very recently. In what could be called a cinematic conflation of Flash Gordon and The Hunt for Red October, Govert Schilling's *Flash!: The Hunt for the Biggest Explosions in the Universe* describes the exciting and ever-changing field of GRB research. Based on interviews with leading scientists, *Flash!* provides an insider's account of the scientific challenges involved in unravelling the enigmatic nature of GRBs. A science writer who has followed the drama from the very start, Schilling describes the ambition and jealousy, collegiality and competition, triumph and tragedy, that exists among those who have embarked on this recherche. Govert Schilling is a Dutch science writer and astronomy publicist. He is a contributing editor of *Sky and Telescope* magazine, and regularly writes for the news sections of *Science* and *New Scientist*. Schilling is the astronomy writer for *de Volkskrant*, one of the largest national daily newspapers in The Netherlands, and frequently talks about the Universe on Dutch radio broadcasts. He is the author of more than twenty popular astronomy books, and hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles on astronomy.

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